SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT

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SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT HISTORY

A stranger viewing the seal of the City of San Francisco might ascribe the Phoenix thereon to the tragic fire of 1906. But the "fire bird" had been chosen over fifty years earlier to commemorate the very birth of the City.

In April 1848, the community of San Francisco consisted of less than two hundred buildings and had a population numbering about one thousand. Yet, by the close of 1849, due to the gold strike, it was estimated the population numbered close to twenty-five thousand, and was growing by about four thousand immigrants per month.

There was no such thing as a home to be found, scarcely even a proper house could be seen. Both dwellings and places of business were either common canvas tents or rough board shanties erected helter-skelter every which way, with little regard for life safety or fire hazard. This conglomeration of structures could truly be called "The Combustible City".

The heart of San Francisco was destroyed by fire six times in a period of eighteen months. Yet, each time, following the example of its mythical symbol, the City had risen anew from its smouldering ruins.

PART I

THE VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT

1849 - 1866

The first great fire in San Francisco originated on Christmas Eve, 1849 at Dennison's exchange on Kearny between Clay and Jackson Streets. Before a bucket brigade could be formed the fire was through the roof and spreading to surrounding buildings. By the time it burned itself out, fifty buildings were gone at a loss of $1,500.000.

The destructive blaze awakened the people to the great danger the City was exposed to from fire, and on Christmas night several citizens who had been firemen in the East met and formed a volunteer Fire Department.

Heading the group were Frederick D. Kohler who was chosen as the first Chief, and David C. Broderick, later to be slain by Supreme Court Justice Terry in the most famous duel of the West. Their actions had the support of the Town Council, which met on January 28th, 1850 and formally elected Kohler as the first Chief Engineer of the San Francisco Volunteer Fire Department.

Three hand pump fire engines, which had been brought around Cape Horn from the East, formed the equipment of the new department. The first three companies were called The San Francisco, The Empire, and The Protection Company. The San Francisco, a small engine, was originally owned by President Martin Van Buren who used it to pump water on his New York estate.

An early report shows the strength of the Department consisted of ninety volunteers assigned to the three engine companies and an additional forty volunteers to man a hook and ladder company that had been newly formed.

While these first companies proved adequate in controlling many small fires, it was to take a second and third great fire to bring home to the citizens the need for an expanded and properly organized department.

On May 4, 1850 the second great fire broke out in a saloon erected on the exact site of the first fire. Spreading explosively through the flimsy building construction the fire quickly engulfed the entire block bounded by Kearny, Clay, Montgomery and Washington Streets. The fire jumped Kearny Street and was destroying Washington Street across from Portsmouth Square, when the gathering crowd, led by Mayor-elect John W. Geary, performed a feat that would be impossible with our modern construction. They tore down by hand every house on Dupont (now Grant) between Washington and Jackson Streets. That stopped the flames from going up the hill, but the lack of water was the greatest difficulty, and the fire ended when it had burned itself out at the bounderies where buildings had either been blown up or torn down. The loss was $4,000,000, three hundred buildings had been consumed and one man and two children were burned to death.

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This was the center of town and contained the most valuable land, so rebuilding was quickly started. The next day a hotel under a tent was running full blast on its burned out site. The El Dorado gambling house moved two blocks and rented another building at $6,000 a month. Within weeks the entire area was rebuilt.

Chief Kohler complained bitterly of the lack of water and the Council now ordered construction of a twelve thousand gallon cistern in Portsmouth Square. Artesian wells were dug in various parts of the City and an ordinance was passed ordering all householders to have six water buckets kept in readiness for fires.

But these preventive measures were not taken in time. On the morning of June 14th, little more than a month since the last fire, the third great fire occurred.

This fire was the most destructive of all, the loss being $5,000,000 and three hundred buildings destroyed. The fire devastated the area between Clay, California and Kearney Streets down to the edge of the bay.

Again the ruined area was rebuilt. The lessons had been learned however, and now the type of construction was of a more sturdy nature, with more thought being given to safety. Three disasterous fires with a total loss of $10,500,000 had made an impression.

On June 24, 1850 an ordinance for proper organization of a fire department was passed by the Board of Aldermen and Mayor Geary signed it on July 1, 1850. Now the Department was to be run on strict business lines, having its first rules and regulations adopted at this time. Two months later, on September 9, 1850, California was admitted into our Nation as the 31st State.

Three more great fires occurred all within the next nine months, each serving to strengthen the resolve of the people to build a greater and safer city.

The fourth fire occurred on September 17, 1850 and destroyed one hundred and twenty-five buildings, but it was the fifth fire that made a much more lasting impression on the populace. It occurred on May 4, 1851, the anniversary of the second great fire. Aided by a high wind the fire spread rapidly, and in a few hours, the entire business section was one mass of flames. Even the sidewalks contributed to the holocaust. Consisting of heavy planking, the hollow spaces beneath them acted as blowpipes and spread the fire from street to street. In less than ten hours more than eighteen blocks lay smouldering, at a loss of over $12,000,000.

Incendiarism was rife during this early period of the City's history and this fire too was laid to the arsonists activities. For years afterwards, the anniversary of the "Great Fire" of May 1851 was viewed with apprehension and fear. As the day neared, extraordinary precautions were taken by the Fire Department to prevent a reoccurrence. The apparatus was placed in the street in readiness, and several men remained on watch all night in each of the engine houses.

Yet a scant six weeks later on June 27, 1851 the City was again racked by fire which was also believed to be of incendiary origin. It originated on Pacific near Powell Street and spread rapidly in a south east direction. This fire razed the area between Powell and Sansome Streets, from Clay to Broadway. The loss was over three million dollars, and the section of the City destroyed was one that had been spared in the earlier fires.

After these last fires a great improvement was made in the strength and fire resistance of the new buildings. Solid brick walls, two and three feet thick, double shutters and doors of iron characterized the new buildings. But this superior construction was confined to the central business section, where many business concerns had suffered losses in each of the great fires.

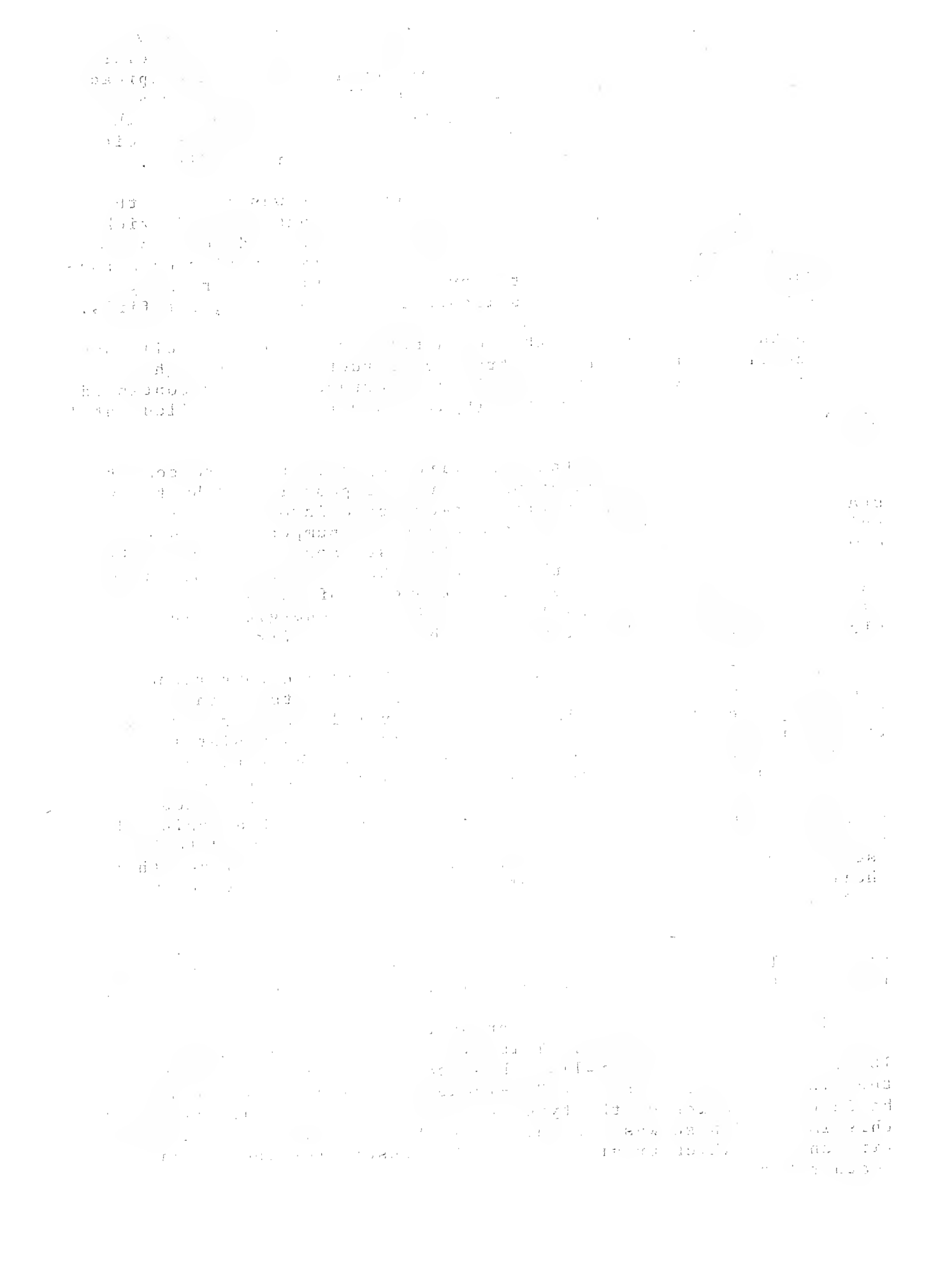
On the fringes and in the residential sections, the buildings still continued to be of wood frame construction. Although several more cisterns were installed, shortage of water continued to plague the fire department. (Hydrants were not installed until 1858).

The first equipment that the Fire Department had to combat the numerous fires in the growing city was poor indeed by todays standards. The engines, until steamers came into use, were pulled to the fire by the men and had to be pumped by hand to develop the pressure necessary for fire streams. This was called "manning the brakes", and the effort to keep one of these engines pumping was tremendous. Even the strongest of men were soon exhausted by the strenuous labor; their best energies being already expended in dragging the machine to the fire.

The early hook and ladder was an awkward and cumbersome affair that was drawn by ropes through the streets as fast as the "vamps" could run. After using their ladders to rescue any trapped persons from upper floors, the crew would assist in the firefighting. If no water was nearby and the fire was spreading to other buildings, the men would set their hooks on the roofs of the exposed frame buildings and with all hands tugging on the ropes, the walls would be ripped out dropping the roof and floors to the ground. Powder was also carried to be used on the more sturdy buildings, but the firemen realized that their greatest need was adequate water and the means to convey it to the fires.

In 1850 the fire hose was made of buffalo hide and was riveted along the seams. It weighed about sixty pounds to each fifty foot length, excluding couplings, and cost $1.25 per foot.

In 1868 the Department began using what was termed "gum" hose, being mostly rubber. This type of hose lasted only to 1871, when cotton rubber-lined hose came into use. In 1900 the size was increased to 2-3/4-inches, and this hose had the basic construction of the type still in use today. The need for this improved hose was made necessary by the advent of the steam fire engine, which provided too much pressure for the gum and leather hose.



The introduction of the "steamers" with their great weight soon led to the necessity of providing horses for motive power. Although horses were used to pull apparatus in parades as early as July 4, 1851, it was not until 1863 that firehorses were used for emergency response in San Francisco. On this date, Pennsylvania Engine Company #12 received a new steam fire engine that was designed to be drawn by horses.

The first response of the horse drawn company was to a still alarm on August 19, 1863. The smoking steamer dashing thru the streets, being pulled by three black horses, was a great sensation. In the reorganization of 1866, Pennsylvania Company became Engine Company #6. Fifty five years later on August 19, 1921, Engine Company #6 responded to the last fire in which horses were used in the San Francisco Fire Department. Again the engine was drawn by three horses, all black. An hour and fifteen minutes after this fire, the company was motorized.

During the formation of the Volunteer Department, the companies paid for their own apparatus and even provided their own houses, but as soon as enabling ordinances could be passed, the City assumed all expenses that were incurred.

The city ordinance of July 1850 authorizing the volunteer department also provided for the method of selecting succeeding Chief Engineers. This was accomplished by conducting an election among the membership of the Department, who also voted for two Assistant Chief Engineers.

Chief Kohler held office until September 20th of 1850, when he resigned. As a result of an election held among the members of the volunteer department, Chief Kohler was returned to office by popular vote and served until August 25, 1851. His resignation at that time disclosed that he had been appointed Adjutant General of the State.

Chief Kohler was succeeded in office by the following Volunteer Chiefs: Franklin E.R. Whitney, George H. Hossefross, Charles P. Duane, James E. Nuttman, Franklin E.R. Whitney (second term), and David Scannell.

The men comprising the first volunteers of the Fire Department consisted of some of the most influential men of the community. None were so high in office or so proud of position that he was not honored by a membership in the early fire brigade.

Their loyalty to their individual companies was exceeded only by their fierce competitive spirit. The sound of the alarm bell always meant a race challenge to beat the other engines to the fire and put "first water" on the blaze. This keen competition led to many physical combats, and some of the fights reached riot proportions. But whenever a really big fire was on, all individual bickering was lost in a unanimous resolve that all do their utmost to preserve the safety of life and property.

As the City was in constant danger from fire and therefore so dependent upon the efficiency of the Fire Department, it was natural that the volunteer firemen should be regarded with particular favor and affection by the populace. One of the early citizens who held the Department in such high regard was Lily Hitchcock, a woman of personage in her own right.

Lily Hitchcock was the daughter of a doctor and a valued member of society. From the first day she helped pull Knickerbocker Engine Company 5 to a fire she caught the spirit of the volunteers. She gloried in the excitement of a big blaze, and there never was a gala parade in which Lily was not seen atop Knickerbocker #5, enbowered with flags and flowers. She became literally the patroness of all firemen of her city.

When Mrs. Hitchcock-Coit died on July 22, 1929 at age 86, she left one third of her fortune to the City "to be expended in an appropriate manner for the purpose of adding to the beauty of the City which I have always loved". Two memorials were erected as a result of her generosity. One, Coit Memorial Tower, is surely a significant symbol to the memory of one of such colorful individuality. The second, unveiled in Washington Square on December 3, 1933, is a memorial tribute to the San Francisco Firemen. It is a sculptured block representing a life sized group of three firemen, one of them carrying a woman in his arms.

The valuable service performed by the early volunteers was recognized by an act passed by the State Legislature on March 25, 1853, exempting members of the fire departments throughout the State from military service and from jury duty. Later members of the Department who availed themselves of this privilege formed an "Exempt Fire Company". This was largely a social organization, although long after the Paid Fire Department came into existance the members voluntarally rendered yeoman aid to the new Department whenever needed. At its height, the Exempt Company consisted of 1,226 members. There could be no recruitment under the law, and when each member passed on, his vacated place was left unfilled, until in time, all were gone.

San Francisco had its first firebell in 1851. It was purchased at the request of the Chief Engineer, and soon after, each firehouse had a bell atop its roof to sound the alarm.

Whenever a fire was discovered the bell on the nearest firehouse would begin to clang and the alarm was taken up and sounded by the other houses. It became very confusing to determine the actual fire location, so in 1852 the City was divided into fire districts, numbered one to eight and the bells then signaled the number of the district concerned.

This system, supplemented by whistles, continued until 1865 when the first electrically operated fire alarm system was inaugurated. The system was authorized on October 1864 and in January of 1865 the Supervisors adopted a resolution to spend $24,000 for the installation. The new fire alarm system was

completed on April 13, 1865 when official tests were made. The first alarm over the new system was from Box 47, Powell and Market Streets on April 26th. It was a false alarm.

The year 1866 saw the passing of the old volunteer department which had grown in size to comprise fourteen engine companies, three hook and ladder companies, and five independent hose companies. Four of the engine companies had steamfire engines, and one of these, Pennsylvania #12 had its engine drawn by horses; all of the others were worked by hand. The active volunteers at this time numbered 775 members.

During the last year of the volunteers the Department had responded to 220 alarms. Two hundred of these alarms were actual fires, thirty-three of which were of incendiary origin. There were 448 hydrants, 42 cisterns in good order, and eight cisterns in poor condition. The Department had 10,800 feet of hose.

On the morning of December 2, 1866 the daily papers appeared with a notification signed by David Scannell, the Chief Engineer of the retiring volunteers, stating that the Paid Fire Department would go into operation on Sunday night December 2, at 12 O'clock, and informing the members of the Volunteer Fire Department that after that time their services would no longer be required.

The days of the volunteers were over, they had done valiant work. It had been a Department upon whose existance and growth the City had relied for many years. The intelligence of the men who started far back in the pioneer days, to build a Department had much to do with the success of the Department today. It had great leaders and vigorous and courageous members, all dedicated to their common purpose, to keep their City and its people safe from harm.

SAN FRANCISCO FIRE DEPARTMENT HISTORY

PART II

THE PAID DEPARTMENT

DECEMBER 3, 1866

The legal basis for the origin of the Paid Department stemmed from legislation titled, "An Act to Establish a Paid Fire Department for the City and County of San Francisco". (Approval by the State Legislature was granted on March 2, 1866). The Act provided for a five man Board of Fire Commissioners to manage the affairs of the Department.

The Fire Department consisted of a Chief Engineer, two Assistant Chiefs, one Corporation Yard Keeper and six steam fire engine companies. Each engine company to have one foreman, one engineer, one driver, one fireman, and eight extra or "call" men. There were two Hook-and-Ladder Companies each consisting of one foreman, one driver, one tillerman and twelve extra men. Additionally, there were three Hose Companies, each consisting of one foreman, one driver, one steward and six extra men.

During April of 1866, the Board of Supervisors purchased four steam fire engines and one hose reel from the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company of Manchester, New Hampshire. This purchase was made at a cost of $17,655. In July of the same year the Supervisors also bought twenty-seven horses to provide motive power for the new and heavier equipment.

One of the first acts of the new Board of Fire Commissioners was to appoint the Department executive officers. On October 6, 1866 F.E.R. Whitney was appointed Chief Engineer; H.W. Burckes, First Assistant Chief; and Charles H. Ackerson, Second Assistant Chief.

The Department went into active operation on December 3, 1866. David Hayes was appointed Superintendent of Steamers, Tom Sawyer, Corporation Yard Keeper, and John L. Durkee, Fire Marshal.

Salaries of the officers and men were fixed by statute as follows: Chief Engineer, $250 per month; Assistant, $100; Foreman, $30; Engineer, $80; Driver, $60; Tillerman, $50; and extra man, $20. The terms of office of the Chief Engineer and Assistant Chiefs were fixed at two years.

Chief Whitney filled the office of Chief Engineer until July 20, 1870 upon which date Charles Ackerson assumed the office. During the first seven months of the new Department there had been one hundred and fifty nine fires, of which forty-four were suspected of being arson.

Matters in the Department had not been running smoothly and the influence of political partisanship was having a demoralizing effect. Chief Ackerson's term of office was of brief duration, and on April 3, 1871, David Scannell was appointed the new Chief Engineer.

Chief Scannell was very popular and his appointment gave general satisfaction, not only in the city, but in all surrounding districts. Some five hundred members of the former volunteers paraded through the streets in warm appreciation of the appointment of their old chief.

In 1871 while Scannell was chief, a disasterous fire on Market Street exposed several weak spots in the Fire Department. The fire was in the Harpending Business Block, a group of eight, three story brick buildings. No department ladder could reach the top of the third story, and several of those used, broke during firefighting operations. To add to the confusion, the fire hose continually burst when the pressure was raised in an unsuccessful attempt to reach the upper floors with adequate streams.

The fire caused an outburst of public indignation and much criticism by the press. Chief Scannell was ill during this period, but the Board of Fire Commissioners was quick to act and correct the deficiencies of the Department.

As a result of this fire the "Hayes" truck was put into service for the first time. This truck had been invented by Daniel D. Hayes, the Superintendent of Steamers, and built under his license in 1868. The City had purchased the truck for $3,000 but it had laid idle for three years.

It was the first "aerial" ladder used in the Department and it quickly replaced the old splice-ladder then in use. It was a mechanically operated turntable ladder which was raised by operation of a crank that turned a worm assembly. The Hayes Truck gained national fame, and by the year 1900, over two hundred and ninety were in service throughout the country.

In 1873 the Department was beset by internal troubles initiated by a dispute between two of the Fire Commissioners. A Judgement of the Supreme Court had decided that a Mr. Merrill was entitled to a seat on the board, then claimed by a Mr. Bulger. So strong was the spirit of partisanship between contending factions that Chief Scannell was sacrificed. In April of that year the Board of Fire Commissioners removed him from office and appointed Chief Whitney in his place. Before the year was out a new Board of Commissioners was elected, and on December 1, 1873 Scannell was reappointed Chief Engineer.

However, Chief Whitney refused to turn over the Department to Chief Scannell, claiming the meeting of the new board was irregular. The Department was confronted with the unique situation of having two Chiefs and two Board of Fire Commissioners. The two boards met at the same time and in the same room, each claiming the exclusive right to act. The situation was finally resolved in favor of Chief Scannell and the new board, but not before matters had gone so far that a warrant for the arrest of Chief Whitney had been issued.

An innovation made in July 1878 was the organization of the first fireboat company. Built in San Francisco, the tug "Governor Irwin" was tendered to the Fire Commissioners and performed valuable service on the city waterfront. She was eighty-six feet long, carried twelve hundred feet of hose and pumped 65,000 gallons per hour. After a short period of service it was recommissioned as Hose Company #9, located at Broadway Wharf.

At this time Fire Department Headquarters was at old City Hall, 235 Kearny Street. Membership in the department had grown to 276 regulars plus 201 extra men. The department had 62 horses in service and in the preceeding year 321 alarms had been answered. The number of hydrants throughout the City had increased to 1,247.

On May 17th, 1890, Chemical Engine Company #1 was organized as an experiment. It was located at the south-west corner of Mission and New Montgomery, and quickly proved its worth. It was much lighter than the steam engines, better adapted for the hilly districts, and its speed of operation made it one of the departments most important pieces of apparatus for many years to come.

On July 1st, 1891, Chief Scannell put the first water tower into service at 50 Sacramento Street. A first class Hale Tower, it gave good service until destroyed by falling walls at a fire at Fourth and Folsom Streets. A replacement tower (Gorter) was built by the local Corporation Yard and put in service in 1898.

Earlier, Chief Scannell had recommended limiting frame buildings to 60 feet in height, and the installation of fire escapes and standpipes on tall buildings. The City was expanding rapidly and the Chief was taking every step he could to keep abreast of its needs.

On March 30, 1893, Chief Scannell died while still in service. He had been a member for forty-three years, and served as Chief Engineer for nearly a quarter of a century. He had been a good organizer and an ideal Chief. The Department had prospered greatly under his tenure.

By his will he left a sum of $2,000, the annual interest of which is applied to the purchase of the "David Scannell" medal. This medal is an award given to firemen who have performed meritoriously at personal risk of their own lives. The Chief Engineer, the Mayor and the Controller are the custodians of the fund.

The first award was made on August 20, 1896 to Battalion Chief John Wills for rescuing a woman from a burning building at 52 Fifth Street. In the intervening years the medal has been awarded several times for heroic acts. The latest award was made posthumously to Captain Andrew Benton, who gave his life on September 1, 1964 after rescuing a woman from a burning building at 391 Valencia Street.

After Chief Scannell's death, Dennis T. Sullivan assumed command of the Department, and it soon became evident that he was fully equal to the task. A fireman of the highest ability, and a firm disciplinarian, his leadership brought the Department to a very high standard of efficiency.

During his term of office several more companies were organized and two Drill Towers were erected. The first Drill Tower was built in July 1898 at 3050 17th Street, and a second one was also constructed at Francisco and Stockton Streets. The latter was destroyed by fire in 1906, while the first one burned on November 1, 1919, with the loss of one fireman's life. This tower was then replaced by one of brick and steel, seven stories high, located in a gore of land bounded by Bryant, Eleventh, and Division Streets.

In 1898, Chief Sullivan recommended that the use of "Call" or extra men be abolished and the Department be organized into a fully paid department. At the time, there were 344 "Call" men who worked at their regular occupations throughout the City and only responded when needed. During the day, they were summoned by steam whistles, while at night, fire alarm tappers installed in their homes notified them of an alarm. Chief Sullivans recommendations were adopted when a new City Charter, passed on January 8, 1900, reorganized the Department upon a fully paid basis.

The Department had grown in size to thirty-six engine companies, eight truck companies, seven chemical companies, one water tower and two monitor batteries.

Civil Service replaced the former methods of determining the fitness of departmental candidates. The first examination under the new charter was held on February 1903, in the gymnasium of the Olympic Club.

Pension provisions were also liberalized, providing half pay for disability and a service pension after twenty-five years of duty.

The new charter placed the Fire Department under the management of a four man Board of Fire Commissioners appointed by the Mayor for a term of four years. Their annual salary was set at $1,200.

Under the new regime, Chief Sullivan retained his post as Chief Engineer, John Dougherty became First Assistant, and P.H. Shaughnessy, Second Assistant Engineer. The title of Battalion Chief replaced the office of Assistant or District Engineer, and the Department of Electricity was charged with supervision of the Fire Alarm Office.

A modern fire alarm system had been installed. Water mains with over four thousand hydrants connected had displaced the old time fire cisterns. These cisterns were, despite Chief Sullivans recommendations to the contrary and in the face of his repeated warnings, allowed to deteriorate. All other equipment and appurtances of the Department, on the whole, where thoroughly modern and in good condition.

No alarm sounded for the greatest disaster that ever devastated San Francisco. The first jarring shock of the earthquake that struck the City on the morning of April 18, 1906 broke five hundred and fifty-six of the six hundred batteries that operated the fire alarm system, effectively silencing it.

Within a few hours, fifty-two fires had started. Before the flames were extinguished three days later, an estimated four hundred and seventy eight persons were dead, and the property loss was over $350,000,000. The area burned was 4.7 square miles, which included all of the down town section. Twenty-eight thousand buildings had been destroyed by the combined destructiveness of the earthquake and fire.

The Department was immeasurably handicapped by the lack of water. The mains conducting the supply of water to the City had been ruptured beyond immediate repair, and the supply stored in the city reservoirs soon wasted through numerous breaks in the distributing mains. Water had to be drafted from the few cisterns that were soon dry, and even from the large main sewers.

Most of the big down town fires had combined into one, the oncoming flames having at one time formed a three mile front. The Department never stopped, its men dropping from exhaustion and sleeping as they lay in the streets - only to get up in a few minutes and go after the fire again. Word that their beloved Chief, Dennis T. Sullivan, was dying from injuries spurred the men on to make a valiant battle for him, as he would have wanted done had he been able to direct them. (Chief Sullivan was injured by falling walls while in his quarters on Bush Street and died four days later in Letterman Hospital).

Relentlessly the flames went on through the days and nights of the 18th, 19th, and 20th. In the early dawn of April 21st, the progress of the fire was finally stopped at Van Ness Avenue, a hundred foot wide thoroughfare.

The Department had lost twenty of its houses. Three steam engines, one hook and ladder, one monitor battery, four autos, two hose wagons, and two buggies had all been destroyed. Also lost to the flames had been over half of all Department hose.

John Dougherty, First Assistant, temporarily succeeded Chief Sullivan, but, being well along in years, he relinquished the reins to Patrick H. Shaughnessy, who was appointed Chief Engineer on June 15, 1906.

Chief Shaughnessy showed great initiative and lost no time in rebuilding the Department to its former effectiveness. It was during his term of office that construction was initiated for installation of the Auxiliary Water Supply System, considered to be one of the most important protective features of the Department. It permits the rapid concentration of powerful streams without the use of pumpers in the congested value and adjoining mercantile, industrial and closely built residential districts.

Construction of the system had been repeatedly urged by Chief Sullivan since the late 1800's, but it took the earthquake and fire of 1906 to give the necessary impetus for initation.

Authorized by a bond issue of $5,200,000, the system was designed by the foremost engineering experts with a view to preventing a recurrence of the 1906 catastrophe. The system, comprised of Twin Peaks Reservoir at an elevation of 750 feet, and complimented by two intermediate tanks, is able to supply almost any block of the congested high-value district with 15,000 gallons a minute at a pressure of 229 psi. The supply is delivered through a closely gridironed distribution system which was served initially by 889 hydrants. These hydrants were, and still are, for the exclusive use of the Fire Department. (Hydrants now number over 1400)

Two pumping stations built on bed rock, with a combined capacity of 24,000 gallons per minute at a 300 pound pressure, are ready to pump into the high pressure system at a moments notice.

Two fire boats, the Dennis T. Sullivan, and David Scannell, while independent fire fighting units, were built as, and formed part of, the city's "Auxiliary Water Supply System". Completed in 1909 at the Risdon Iron Works at a combined cost of $279,618, they were each capable of delivering 10,000 gallons of water per minute. Permanent manifold connections located along the waterfront permitted either or both of the boats to pump into and supplement the high pressure system.

These boats effectively safeguarded the harbor and waterfront for many years until 1954, when they were retired from service due to prohibitive maintenance costs. They were replaced by the diesel-powered "Phoenix", which has a pumping capacity of 9600 gallons per minute.

As part of the initial auxiliary supply, a system of underground reinforced concrete cisterns was developed. Averaging 75,000 gallons each, and now numbering over one hundred and fifty, they are scattered strategically throughout the City to provide an emergency supply in the event of any failure of the regular water distribution system. The entire installation was completed in 1913, and formally accepted by the Fire Department in January 1914.

On March 16, 1910, Chief Shaughnessy, having successfully led the Department through one of its more crucial periods, retired from service.

Thomas R. Murphy, the next Chief Engineer, was only forty years old at the time he assumed command of the Department. He came at a time when the Department was facing another great challenge; the replacement of horse-drawn equipment with the newly developed motorized fire engine.

The horses had been a remarkable success since the day in 1863 when they had first seen fire service. To meet the unusual demands and standards required by the Fire Department, a special breed had been developed which was a cross between the great Percheron mares and the English Trotter stallions. They were placed in service when four years old and often served to the age of twenty-four years, after which they were retired to a farm near Martinez. With the advent of motorized equipment however, the end of their usefulness was drawing near.

On July 11, 1912, a unique contest was conducted in the presence of Chief Murphy, the Fire Commissioners, the Fire Committee of the Board of Supervisors, and a large attending crowd. A newly designed motor drawn apparatus, the Nott Motor Engine, was to be pitted against the finest horse drawn rig in the Department. The object - to determine the swiftest and most efficient of the two.

The start of the race was from Second & Clement, the old house of Twenty-six Engine. At the sound of the gong the horses leaped into their collars and charged out the door, smoke already belching from the steamer. The driver of the Nott Motor Engine cranked his machine and was quickly in pursuit. His objective was the hydrant at Thirteenth and Lake Streets. He made it in 2 minutes and 20 seconds and the crew had water out the nozzle in a total elapsed time of 3 minutes and 40 seconds.

The foam flecked horses drew up to their hydrant at Eleventh and Lake in 3 minutes and 55 seconds, with water flowing in 5 minutes and 6 seconds.

Everyone knew what the results meant. The days of the horses had passed, and after this time none were purchased for Fire Department use.

In 1903, the first electric auto had been purchased for the Chief and three more were bought in 1905, but they proved unreliable and none were in service at the time of the fire.

The first motor driven apparatus was installed in Chemical Company #3 on Bush Street in 1912. In March of the next year the first auto-driven steam engine was installed at Engine Company Twenty-eight, Stockton and Greenwich Streets.

By July of 1917 twenty of the forty-eight engine companies in service had been motorized, but there were still two hundred and forty three horses in service in the Department. An appropriation of $100,000 at this time helped to speed the transition, and by August 1921, the Department was fully motorized.

By 1916 the uniformed force numbered 815 men. In addition to forty-eight engine companies, the Department had thirteen trucks, twelve chemicals, two water towers and two fire boats in service.

It was also during this period that progressive action was taken to liberalize the firemen's hours. It is perhaps difficult today to realize that from 1866, firemen had to work twenty four hours a day, with only one day off in thirty. In 1902 and again in 1906 attempts to gain relief had failed.

In November of 1912, the two platoon system was on the ballot by referendum, but the people turned it down by over twelve thousand votes. Meanwhile, as years went on, firemen got one day off each week. In 1913, the firemen united and formed the David Scannell Club, and the proposition again went on the ballot in November of 1916. Its final passage was contributed to the efforts of the Scannell Club, and on August 15, 1918, the two platoon system went into effect.

The Department had consisted of two firefighting divisions since the early 1800's, but with the change in hours without appointment of additional Assistant Chiefs, the entire City was constituted as one division. It was not until November 1, 1926, that additional appointments made it possible to recreate a second division.

In 1915, the new Central Fire Alarm Station went into service at Turk and Octavia Streets. A Class "A" reinforced concrete building, located in a public park, its location helps make it immune from general conflagrations. With most equipment manufactured and installed by the Department of Electricity, and generous fire alarm box distribution throughout the city, the system still provides one of the swiftest and most dependable systems in the country.

The year 1915 was notable also for an enviable record compiled by the Department. This was the year of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, which was conducted in the northern section of the city. Housed almost entirely in combustible structures, were treasures worth untold millions, yet the fire losses including the period of construction and dismantling were less than $250.00.

For several years, Chief Murphy had urged the formation of a Fire Prevention Bureau to inspect hazards and enforce statutes and ordinances relating to fire prevention, fire protection and fire-spread control. Finally, in June 1920, the Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety was established by ordinance. Due to insufficient funds to provide permanent personnel, the operation was not as effective as the Chief desired. Initially, operation was dependent on a continually changing inspection force of detailed members, and it was not until eight years later that sufficient budget appropriations could be realized to overcome this deficiency.

Under Chief Murphy's vigorous leadership, the Department had evolved into an efficient and modern Department well regarded throughout the country. However, in 1928, Chief Murphy's health deteriorated and after a prolonged illness, he passed away on November 4, 1929.

On November 9, 1929, Charles J. Brennan was appointed Chief Engineer, having served as acting chief intermittently since October of 1928.

He directed his first energies toward developing the Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety to a position of greater importance and responsibility. Through the combined efforts of the Chief and the Commission, an appropriation was obtained sufficient to give the Bureau seven permanent inspectors. An ordinance of June 1937 created the office of Chief of the Division of Fire Prevention and Investigation, combining the Bureau of Public Safety and the Fire Marshal's office under the direct supervision of this officer. This division, conceived by Chief Sullivan, given the necessary stimulus by Chief Brennan, and under the guidance of succeeding department heads has grown successfully to its present modern day efficiency.

In January 1932, a new charter was enacted into law. By its provisions the membership of the Board of Fire Commissioners was reduced to three members, appointed by the Mayor to serve overlapping four year terms.

Under the revised retirment system the department members, for the first time, were required to contribute to the system. Greater length of employment was also required before being eligible for retirement. In all, the system was less desirable to the members than the one it replaced.

Chief Brennan was retained by the reorganized Commission, and reappointed effective January 15, 1932.

In July of the same year a survey was completed by the National Board of Fire Underwriters, showing the departmental organization at the time.

There were forty-seven engines, fifteen trucks, eleven chemicals, two fireboats, four water towers, a rescue squad, air compressor and two searchlight engines in service in fifty three stations.

Water towers three and four, added in 1927, and operable to a height of thirty feet, were particularly adapted to operate in narrow alleyways as they required no bracing or outriggers.

The two searchlight engines and the air compressor had been assembled at the Fire Department shops and put into service in 1929 and 1930, respectively.

One 85-foot American LaFrance aerial had been put in service in 1929, all other trucks were of city service type, those acquired since 1924 being built in the municipal shops to Fire Department specifications.

Also in service were eight hose wagons or tenders, all equipped with turret pipes. Of the forty-seven pumpers, only eighteen were of thousand gallon capacity. (After 1926 all pumpers purchased were required to be of thousand gallon capacity).

The rescue squad originally was instituted in November, 1922 as a group of specialists equipped to handle elevator accidents and rescues of all types. Supplemented with Gibbs helmets, they were soon being used in the most difficult fire situations. In this they proved eminently successful, and quickly established an enviable reputation.

Total Department membership in March 1932 was 1217; the uniformed force consisting of 1184 men. The Department was organized into two divisions and eleven battalion districts.

The early years of Chief Brennans' term of office were paralleled by the economic depression that gripped the nation in the beginning of the thirties. This resulted naturally, in stringent budget and financial appropriations, which had the effect of curtailing any major Department plans for expansion, or even the orderly replacement of aging equipment.

The financial crisis grew so severe in 1932 that all department members agreed to a voluntary wage reduction in a hopeful effort to reduce the city's economic problems. It was during this same period, and attributable to the same depressed financial state, that officers were removed from chemical companies, the crew in the future consisting of two hosemen.

One of the few advances made by the Department in these lean years resulted from the formation of the Works Project Administration. As a result of this program several of the Department buildings were remodeled, new heating and plumbing facilities installed, and much necessary maintenance accomplished.

Little else changed in the Department until the advent of the Worlds Fair of 1939-40 on Treasure Island. Charged with the fire protection responsibility of the entire installation on the man-made island, the Department established two complete stations at the fair site. The equipment situated on the island consisted of two engines, two trucks, two tank wagons, a fireboat and a hosetender all under the general jurisdiction of a Battalion Chief.

The duty proved popular with the members, and there was no problem keeping the stations staffed. The units remained for the duration of the fair and were successful in supplying adequate fire prevention and protection coverage.

About this same time, the old-style chemicals were being replaced with modern water tank units. These tank wagons, holding up to five-hundred gallons of water, and capable of pumping at 150 psi through two reels of hose were assembled at the city shops.

The old chemicals were equipped with two eighty gallon tanks charged with water, soda and acid. When activated, the formed carbon dioxide provided the necessary propellent for the water. They had not changed in principle since they were first placed in service in 1890. They had performed with great efficiency for nearly fifty years.

Shortly after this, Chief Brennan submitted a report to the Fire Commission recommending reorganization of the Department from two to three divisions. On October 29, 1941, the recommendation was approved by a unanimous vote of the Commission. With the necessary realignment of boundries completed, the new headquarters for Division Three was established at 1458 Valencia Street, where it was quartered with Engine Company Thirteen.

The next change of any magnitude occurred in 1943 when the Underwriters Fire Patrol was absorbed into the Department. The Patrol had been established in San Francisco in the year 1875 by the major insurance companies serving the area. Its main purpose was to minimize damage as much as possible from fire and necessary firefighting operations.

It was eventually realized that this function was a necessary and major responsibility of the municipality toward its citizens. Therefore on July 1, 1943, the Patrol was absorbed into the Department under the title "Salvage Corps". The charter amendment that accomplished this change also contained provisions granting civil service tenure to, and allowing retention of, the members of the old patrol. Now composed of four units and equipped with all modern appliances, the salvage companies continue to perform outstanding service, maintaining the excellent reputation established by their predecessors.

In March of the same year, Chief Brennan retired on disability pension after almost fifteen years of capable service as the Chief Executive Officer of the Department.

His successor, Albert J. Sullivan was appointed Chief Engineer on the 17th of March, 1943 and was immediately confronted with the many problems created by World War II. Already two hundred and thirteen firemen were on military leave, and every month brought new vacancies. Temporary replacements employed to fill the gap required extensive training. The Fire Auxiliary Reserve, created by ordinance as an emergency supplement to the Fire Department, was attracting the membership of many public spirited citizens, and their training also became the Departments responsibility.

The rapidly expanding war born industrial installations brought their own problems of inspection, regulation, and protection. A result of this expansion was the creation of the Plant Protection Service. This department subdivision is dedicated to advising, planning, and developing all phases of preventive and protective measures applicable to industry and institutions.

Through these war years, in spite of the manpower shortage, the Department was successful in maintaining the highest level of protective service, not only to its own citizens, but also to the overburdened military installations in and around the City.

With the coming of peace however, Chief Sullivan had no time to rest on his laurels. The vacancies created through the war years had to be filled on a permanent basis and a comprehensive training program developed to handle the large number of new members.

In October of 1947 the classrooms of City College were pressed into service as a supplemental training center, allowing the training program to proceed at an accelerated pace. Chief Sullivan, realizing that the modern fireman needed much broader training than could be supplied at the Department Drill Tower, had by his progressive action initiated the San Francisco Fire Department "Fire College" concept of training. Today, this concept emphasises class work as of equal importance as development of manipulative skills.

When Chief Sullivan retired in 1948, he could be satisfied that the Department was close to normal operating standards; manpower shortage was easing, and training was progressing on a higher level than ever before.

Chief Sullivan's successor, Edward P. Walsh, was appointed on January 21, 1948, a busy year for the new Chief. A survey of the city's fire defenses was being conducted by the National Board of Fire Underwriters, always a critical period for a fire department. On May 7, 1948, the work week was reduced to 56 hours, beginning its own problems of increased employments and budget requests. In August, the Department had finally placed its own two-way radio communications channel in service; until this time it had relied on use of joint facilities with the Police Department. On December 15, 1948, after many months of preparation, a new set of Rules and Regulations was approved and adopted by the Board of Fire Commissioners.

In the June election of 1948 an important charter amendment had been approved which was to become a boon for Chief Walsh and succeeding Department Heads. The rank of Deputy Chief had been created in an attempt to assist the Chief and relieve him of many important but subsidiary duties.

The first Deputy Chief, Alfred J. Galli, appointed on July 1, 1948, brought his customary vigor to the new job and quickly established the merit of the new position.

In February of 1949, the Department took a bold step when the determination was made to assume responsibility for fire protection at the International Airport seventeen miles south of the City. The initial complement consisted of a pumper, battery wagon, and a three-ton Cardox unit, all manned by one officer and three men. From this limited beginning the airport branch has steadily expanded, until at present the protection consists of two stations containing eight first line, and five reserve units. These units are staffed by a Fire Marshal, seven officers and thirty-four men. The Fire Marshal's aide also serves as Training Officer not only for department members but for airline and maintainance staff as well.

Through the years little had been done to the department stations other than routine maintenance. No new building had been erected in nearly two decades. In 1939 the Chamber of Commerce had sponsored an engineering survey of all city firehouses. The results, published in March 1940, warned of the inherent danger of the old buildings in the event of a severe earthquake. However, with the advent of the second World War and its attendant austerity, corrective measures were deferred for several years.

A second engineering survey conducted in 1951 not only supported the findings of the earlier report but stressed the necessity for immediate remedial action. The survey completed in September 1951, recommended abandonment of fifty percent of all fire stations, and reconstruction of most of the remainder. This triggered a reaction which resulted in the successful passage of a Firehouse Bond Issue for $4,750,000 in November of 1952. In the ensuing years the Department embarked on its biggest building program since the days of destruction in 1906.

When Chief Walsh was forced to retire because of ill health in August 1953, the building program was well under way; three houses had been reconstructed and several new buildings were started.

Francis P. Kelly, Chief Walsh's successor, was appointed Chief of Department on August 21, 1953. He had served as Chief of the Division of Fire Prevention & Investigation since the position had been created by ordinance in 1937. Prior to that, he had held the office of Fire Marshal for ten years.

Although Chief Kelly served as Chief of Department for only three years, he made certain that the steady progress of the building program was maintained. Of the fifteen building projects completed during his tenure, the most important by far was the new combined Drill Tower and Fire College.

The old Drill Tower, located at Bryant and Division Streets, had served the Department well since its construction in 1923. For over a quarter of a century every new "Proby" had climbed its walls and slid on ropes from its roof top, as part of the extensive training program designed to develop the dexterity and confidence required of the San Francisco Fireman. However, on October 18, 1951, the old Tower tapped out of service for the last time, to make way for an approaching freeway complex.

The new Training Center, located at Folsom and 19th Streets, went into operation on November 30, 1954. Its facilities consisted of the Drill Tower, a seven story and basement structure completely equipped to provide the mechanics necessary for drilling in all operational and training procedures; a large yard area for training evolutions; and a one story Fire College building housing classrooms, library, photographic laboratory, and general offices. Staffed by a Director of Training and several competent officers, the training center continues to produce the quality of trained personnel which is in keeping with the recognized high standard of the San Francisco Fire Department.

During the same year another Department change had occurred, marking a break with the past. The old city-owned fireboats, "Dennis Sullivan" and "David Scannell", in service since 1909 and an important part of the waterfront fire defense, had been retired from service as a result of mounting repair and maintenance costs.

Their replacement, the diesel-powered "Phoenix", owned by the State and manned and operated by the San Francisco Fire Department, has added to the protection of the dock area since May 1954. Efforts are still being made to provide a second boat to equal the protection afforded by the two old steamers.

Chief Kelly also continued the development of the radio installation program initiated in 1948. By June 1954, all eighteen trucks had been equipped with two-way radio, and a year later in 1955, all salvage units and several outlying engine companies had been similarly equipped. The greater flexibility and control of these units clearly indicated the importance of full radio control of all Department apparatus.

During Chief Kellys' last year in office, the most notable event was the change in working hours of the membership. In conformity with a charter revision, the Chief recommended for Commission approval, the division of the firefighting companies into three shifts, each to work twenty-four consecutive hours on duty. The recommendation was approved and the new system went into effect on March 12, 1956, establishing the basic work schedule which is still in effect today.

In the latter part of the year, Chief Kelly requested abridgment of his leave from his former position. Effective December 16, 1956, he was restored to his former rank of Chief of the Division of Fire Prevention and Investigation, retiring on April 1, 1957.

On December 16, 1956, the succeeding Chief of Department, William F. Murray, was appointed to office by the Fire Commission. He in turn designated as his personal choice for Deputy Chief, Carl F. Kruger.

As the first months passed and significant changes took place, it became evident that the Department was progressing on a carefully planned schedule.

Initially, attention was directed toward revising and delegating administrative and staff activities into efficiently functioning divisions, capable of guiding and coordinating the developing program. This resulted eventually in the Specialized Auxiliary Service, comprising the Divisions of Training, Administration, Fire Prevention, and Special Services, each headed by an Assistant Chief.

The Division of Training was expanded to prepare for a departure from the traditional practice of placing new recruits directly into fire stations. On April 22, 1957, a class of new recruits started the first eight week probationary training program at the Fire College. This training program had to be completed satisfactorily before assignment to actual fire duty. This period of training has gradually been increased to twelve weeks. Successful completion of a final examination at the end of six months remains a prerequisite to permanent appointment.

A comprehensive training manual program was also developed to fill the lack of written training and procedure guides. This program, under the guidance of the Chief, culminated eventually into more than twenty manuals covering all phases of specialized knowledge considered necessary for efficient practices.

In September 1966, a new milestone related to training was achieved. The City College of San Francisco, in cooperation with the Fire Department, initiated a Fire Science Program offering courses in pre-employment and in-service training. Upon successful completion of the course, the student is awarded an Associated Arts degree.

The year 1958 marked the beginning of a sweeping program designed to replace all in-service dual pumpers and tank wagons with the new triple-combination pumper which consolidated the functions of both pieces in one unit. On August 20, 1958 on orders of Chief Murray the program began when Engine Company 6 was replaced with Triple Combination #1. By May of 1961 twenty of the new "triples" were in service and the last tank wagon had been inactivated. All S.F.F.D. pumpers acquired in 1963 and thereafter were required to have a minimum rated capacity of 1250 G.P.M. Replacement of the old City Service Trucks with modern aerials on a one-a-year basis had also been instituted as part of an overall planned program to fully equip the Department with triple pumpers and aerial ladder trucks by the fiscal year 1968-69.

Modernization of the Rescue Squads, Salvage Companies, Foam, and other specialized units have been accomplished by use of the newer apparatus released by the triple combination conversion project.

A program to equip all apparatus with self-contained breathing equipment had its inception during the first month of Chief Murrays tenure. A severe fire on New Year's Eve of 1956 felled over one hundred firemen from smoke and toxic gases before control could be established. Immediately thereafter the Chief pushed through an emergency appropriation for seventy-five units of self-contained breathing equipment.

To maintain and supply the new equipment, a special apparatus called the Service Squad was designed and put into operation on April 6, 1957. By the end of 1965 over two hundred and twenty-five of the self contained units were in service, and all of the old style filter masks had been removed from the apparatus.

The Division of Administration, created on July 1, 1961 by Chief Murray was designed to receive, review, and process all revelant Department business. Routine matters are usually resolved at this level, those of more importance being reserved for the attention of the Chief or Deputy Chief.

A great part of the work load of the Division of Administration is channeled through the Bureau of Assignments and Communications, a supporting unit which executes all matters relating to personnel, dispatching, communications, and information services.

Two major changes have been instrumental in bringing the Bureau of Assignments to the high level of efficiency at which it operates today.

The first, occurring November 7, 1962, was the assumption of responsibility by experienced Fire Department officers for receiving fire calls and controlling all emergency dispatching. This has resolved the conflict caused by the former practice of Department of Electricity members handling this function. The second event was the completion of installation of two-way radio on all first line Fire Department equipment. Under the guidance of a Communications Committee appointed by Chief Murray, the existing radio equipment had been surveyed and a decision made to install a wider range, multi-channel system. This program, started in 1958 and finally completed in May, 1963, allows the Department to function with much greater speed and flexibility both in routine activities and emergency response.

With radio control finally achieved it was possible to institute the successful Fire Safety Survey Program. This program is an ambitious plan to have department members visit all dwellings in the City in an attempt to eliminate common fire hazards, and reduce fire and life loss.

The Division of Special Services was created on May 13, 1958, and administers the department building program for construction, repair, and maintenance. Other functions of this division are department wide research and planning, and the supervision of the Bureau of Engineering and Water Supply.

Under the 1952 bond issue, fifteen new stations were built and eleven were reconditioned. Since then two new stations were completed out of tax funds, but several structures still remained in need of rehabilitation.

This led to the bond issue for $489,000,000 recommended by Chief Murray and approved by the Board of Fire Commissioners. The issue was successfully passed in the November election of 1964. The issue provided funds for a new headquarters building, six new fire stations, and the reconstruction of eight existing stations. With this program completed, virtually all Fire Department buildings will be of modern design with attendant lower repair and maintenance costs.

On January 10, 1966, ground breaking ceremonies were conducted at 260 Golden Gate Avenue for the new San Francisco Fire Department Headquarters. The completion and dedication of the building on April 18, 1967 was a long awaited event and finally released the Department from its fifty year occupancy in the basement of City Hall.

The Division of Fire Prevention and Investigation, vastly expanded both in size and volume of business since its inception in 1920, performs a role of tremendous importance in continuing vigilance of all matters affecting the fire safety of the local populace. Charged with application of State and local codes concerning residential, institutional, and industrial occupancies, thousands of inspections are performed each year by the Division to insure compliance with appropriate laws.

The problem of enforcement has been clarified by the adoption of a new Fire Code on February 1, 1965. The new code, prepared by personnel of the Division, recognizes modern practice and design, and contains appropriate legislation for revision, thus maintaining necessary flexibility.

A charter amendment in 1963 properly placed the Chief of Department in jurisdiction over the Division of Fire Prevention. This amendment finally established the proper formation of the Specialized Auxiliary Service, thereby insuring orderly transaction of Departmental administrative functions.

In May of 1958, new Rules and Regulations, supplemented by a Procedure Guide, re-established Department policy, operational orders, and recommended practices. Disaster operation plans were created developing guidlines for action in the event of disaster from either natural causes or enemy action. Once established, these written statements of practices and policy have not remained static, but are under constant scrutiny for necessary revision. At the present time the Rules and Regulations and the Procedure Guide, have again been rewritten to keep abreast of the changes and progress accomplished within the Department under Chief Murrays tenure.

Communications and Safety Committees, established as part of the concept of delegated administrative duties, pursue new developments and practices for possible department adoption. An Advisory Board reviews, reports and recommends on improvements suggested by department members. Department policy is directed towards keeping members fully informed of all related matters, and encouraging participation in achieving departmental aims.

The Department suffered a deep loss upon the death in February 1964, of Deputy Chief Carl F. Kruger. He had been an integral part, and the key executive of Chief Murrays administrative program. A man of quiet efficiency both in field and office practices, he was beloved by his subordinates, one and all.

The appointment on March 10, 1964, of William P. Lindecker to Deputy Chief brought a continuation of established department efficiency. The first Director of Administration, he had contributed greatly to the re-organization of the Department and has proven essential to current and projected planning.

In the latter part of 1965, the American Insurance Association conducted a regrading survey of the City and County and the Fire Department, in relation to national fire insurance standards.

Two new truck companies had been put into service to protect newly built areas; Truck Company 19, on April 1, 1958, and Truck Company 20, on October 16, 1963. With pumper strength stabilized at forty-seven Engine Companies and two new high expansion foam units activated in October 1965, the Department faced the survey with justifiable confidence.

As a result of the survey which was completed in February 1966, both the City and the Fire Department retained their previous rating of Class 2. The only impediment preventing the Fire Department from attaining the desirable Class 1 rating was the lack of an additional fireboat, a deficiency that Chief Murray has pledged every effort to overcome.

In October 1964, the San Francisco Fire Department Pioneer Memorial Museum, located at 655 Presidio Avenue, was formally dedicated and opened to the public. Planned by Chief Murray, the late Deputy Chief Carl F. Kruger and Captain Louis Hage, the Museum is a memorial to the fire fighting efforts of the past generations of the Department, dating back to the early pioneers. A trip through the Museum brings an awareness of the deep tradition that has played such an important part throughout the history of the Department.

No one is more aware of this tradition and its importance than the present Chief, William F. Murray. Son of a Captain of the San Francisco Fire Department, Chief Murray's intimate knowledge of the Department and its men stems from his earliest childhood days, and forms the basis of the broad fund of knowledge he brought to the position of Chief of Department.

He has found, as has each Chief before him, that successful achievement is dependent to the greatest extent on the well trained and highly motivated men of the Department. He is aware that they have been the essential ingredient in providing the high level of protection the City has enjoyed over the past one hundred years and that they form the basis for the present feeling of confidence in the Department as it faces its second century of progress.